

# BRITAIN'S SECRET WAR IN ANTARCTICA

*At the end of World War II, Britain sent a covert mission to investigate anomalous activities near its secret base at Maudheim in eastern Antarctica and to seek out and destroy a subterranean Nazi haven.*

**Part 1 of 2**

by James Robert © 2005

Email:  
james-robert@hotmail.co.uk

## Introduction

In 1938, Nazi Germany sent an expedition to Antarctica with a mission to investigate sites for a possible base and to make formal claims in the name of the Third Reich. To prepare them for their mission, they invited the great polar explorer Richard E. Byrd to lecture them on what to expect. The following year, a month after hostilities had commenced in Europe, the Germans returned to Neuschwabenland to finish what had been started, with many suggesting that a base was being constructed.

Nine years later, Richard E. Byrd, who by now had become an Admiral in the United States Navy, was sent to Antarctica with the largest task force ever assembled for a polar mission. In Admiral Byrd's own words, the mission (code-named *Highjump*) was "primarily of a military nature".<sup>1</sup> Many claim that the task force was sent to eradicate a secret Nazi base in Queen Maud Land, which the Nazis had renamed Neuschwabenland and which had never been explored as profoundly as the rest of the Antarctic. But, and the big but is, the fact that Admiral Byrd spoke of "flying objects that could fly from pole to pole at incredible speeds"<sup>2</sup> and with well-documented German activity before, during and in the immediate aftermath of World War II, one can't help but wonder whether there is some truth in the Nazi Antarctica myth. Even so, could Operation *Highjump* and Byrd's quotes have overshadowed the truth about British excursions in Antarctica by way of misinformation, bringing attention to *his* mission and, by doing so, making sure that history only remembered one mysterious Antarctic mission?

When the Antarctica mystery is mentioned, Britain is never given more than a footnote. That fact is surprising in itself, especially as British forces were active in Antarctica throughout the war and quite possibly took the initiative in dealing with the Antarctic Nazi threat a whole 12 months before Operation *Highjump* was initiated.

Britain's activities on Antarctica, though less documented and more clandestine, are just as intriguing as the supposed much-vaunted Operation *Highjump*. Unfortunately for Britain, though victorious in the War, it was bankrupted and humiliated by the two new superpowers. But Britain was in a position to regain some pride and surreptitiously upset its supposed allies with the final, decisive battle against the surviving Nazis: a battle that would never be recorded in the history books; a battle that would make its claims on the continent more legitimate; but, most importantly, a battle that ended the war that it had been compelled to wage.

## Antarctic Postage Stamps: Claim or Commemoration?

On 1 February 1946, a set of postage stamps was released with His Majesty's royal approval. The stamps caused international outrage and brought on a diplomatic crisis for a war-weary Great Britain. The offending eight postage stamps commemorated Britain's claim to the Falkland Islands Dependencies, but one of them also depicted a territorial map of Antarctica that completely overlooked Chile's and most of Argentina's claims on the continent. Now why would Britain, when the world economy was in such dire straits, bring about an international crisis over an area of the world that appeared on the surface to be totally devoid of life?

Many historians claim that Britain's postwar interest arose because, with Britain in dire need of materials, Antarctica was deemed as the solution; the stamps were a way of making Britain's claim valid. That assertion, however partially true, does not explain why British forces, as part of Operation *Taberlan*, were on the continent throughout and in the immediate aftermath of the War.

Operation *Taberlan* was activated as a measure of monitoring German activities on the Antarctic continent. The known British bases were mainly on the Antarctic Peninsula, in places such as Port Lockroy and Hope Bay, and on the islands surrounding the peninsula, such as the secret bases on Deception and Wiencke Islands—though some were set up on the continent. The most secret of all has not, and more than likely never will be, disclosed. The base at Maudheim, near the Mühlig-Hoffmann Mountain Range in Queen Maud Land or, alternatively, Neuschwabenland, was so secret that it was never given a name or even a grid reference on official maps.

Could the stamps have been released to commemorate a successful mission in Queen Maud Land? The facts and rumours, as well as a story dispensed by a wartime SAS officer, may shed some light on the many mysteries of the Antarctic arena—a front that has been kept secret for 60 years—and on a hostile encounter that will never be divulged to the public.

Britain has suppressed so many wartime events in the name of national security that now, even 60 years on, many people are still none the wiser about the secrets of the war—from Rudolph Hess to the peace parties, to the even more sinister happenings including Britain's knowledge of the Nazi extermination camps, the Irish Republican Army's flirtation with Nazis, and the lesser known secrets such as SS concentration camps on British soil on Alderney in the Channel Islands. With just those few listed, a pattern of suppression is emerging—and on some, a total denial is normally forthcoming. Antarctica is no exception.

With the passing of time, all those who served in the Neuschwabenland campaign are no longer with us. The last survivor gave me the following account of the forgotten battle. I hasten to add that the story was told on two separate occasions, 10 years apart, and there was not one discrepancy in either account.

[Editor's note: We have deleted opening and closing quotation marks in the next section for ease of reading.]

### The Neuschwabenland Campaign

When Victory in Europe was announced, my unit was resting in a cave in the former Yugoslavia. I was thankful that the War had finally ended, though with war still being waged in the Pacific and tensions rising in Palestine, we were warned that our war could continue.

Thankfully, I was spared from participating in the war against Japan—but alas, I was posted to Palestine where the influx of Jews, allied with a rise in Zionist terrorism, was causing anguish not only to the inhabitants of Palestine but also to the British forces that were sent to stem the Jewish influx and quell the uprisings. I

was warned that my posting in Palestine would continue indefinitely. I saw many of my fellow soldiers die. Thankfully, I received an order at the beginning of October 1945 to report to my commanding officer, as I had been selected for a mission so secret that none of my senior officers knew why I had been requested to go to Gibraltar. I was not told why I had to report, but I went, hopeful that I would soon be discharged into Civvy Street. How wrong I was: I would be spending another Christmas on a war footing.

Once I arrived on Gibraltar I was secreted away by a Major and informed that I would be sent to the Falkland Islands Dependencies for further briefing and that I would be joined by several other soldiers from other elite British forces. The mystery thickened as we were all flown to the Falklands under complete silence. We were ordered to not even speculate about why we had been selected and where we were going.

Upon reaching the desolate and forbidding Falkland Islands, we were introduced to the officer who was leading the expedition and a Norwegian who had served in the Norwegian Resistance, an expert in winter warfare who was going to be training us for the mission that we had no inkling about.

The Falklands is now considered the best-kept secret in the British Army, and being posted there normally meant an easy few years; however, things were different in the 1940s—even more so for those who had been selected with me.

We were forced to undertake a gruelling month's training where we were prepared for cold-weather warfare. From being plunged into the icy Atlantic to facing the elements in a tent on South Georgia, the

training was arduous and there seemed little sense in the madness that we were forced to undertake. However, after the month's training we were briefed by a Major and a scientist, and as the mission was relayed to us we all realised that there would be little chance of us all returning, especially if the suspicions proved correct.

We were informed that we were to investigate "anomalous" activities around the Mühlig-Hoffmann Mountains from the British base in Maudheim. Antarctica, so we were told, was "Britain's secret war". We were then briefed on British activities in the South Pole during the war.

We sat intrigued as to what was being divulged; none of us had heard anything so fascinating or frightening. It was not common knowledge that the Nazis had been to Antarctica in 1938 and 1939, and even less known was the fact that Britain began to set up secret bases around Antarctica in response. The one we were to visit, Maudheim, was the biggest and most important as well as the most clandestine Antarctic base of them all. The reason for its importance was the fact that it was within 200 miles of where the



Nazis had supposedly built their Antarctic base.

We sat there stunned, but still the mystery deepened. We were told about German activity in the Southern Ocean around Antarctica. We were also informed that an inestimable number of U-boats were missing and unaccounted for; but worse, some of those that had surrendered months after the War had ended fuelled even more speculation.

British forces had captured three of the biggest names in the Nazi party—Hess, Himmler and Dönitz—and with their captures Britain was given information that was not going to be shared with Russia or the United States. That information compelled Britain to act alone, and we were spearheading that operation.

We were told in no specific terms what was expected of us and what Britain expected us to find on Antarctica. Britain had more than a strong suspicion that the Germans had built a secret base and had spirited many of the unaccounted Nazis away from the turmoil in Europe.

Still, more and more revelations were forthcoming. The summer before, we were told, the original scientists and commandos had found an "ancient tunnel". Under orders, the force went through the tunnel but only two returned before the Antarctic winter set in. During the winter months, the two survivors made absurd claims over the radio about "Polar Men, ancient tunnels and Nazis". Radio contact was finally lost in July 1945, and ominously for our mission, going into the unknown, the last broadcast brought us all further anxiety as we listened to the fear in the voice: "...the Polar Men have found us!" was screamed before contact was lost.

After the radio broadcast was played, we were then given a rousing speech from the Major who would be leading the expedition to investigate what had happened. "We are to go to the base at Maudheim, find the tunnel, investigate the enigma of the Polar Men and the Nazis and do what we can to make sure the Nazi threat is destroyed."

When asked for questions, we all had so many, and thankfully the answers were honest and direct. We were informed that evasive action was being taken because Britain was well aware of US and USSR intentions in mounting their own expeditions, and Britain did not want to risk the chance that the US or the USSR would discover the base and gain further Nazi technology. Both countries had a technological advantage over Britain because of the scientists, equipment and research both countries had recovered. Nevertheless, Britain wanted to be the nation to destroy the menace because Britain viewed Antarctica as under the British Empire's jurisdiction, and if the Nazis were there it was their duty and their desire to eradicate them first and thus deny both the USA and the USSR the propaganda value of fighting the last battle of World War II.

We were flown to the pre-designated drop-off point which was 20 miles from the Maudheim base; snow tractors had already been despatched and were awaiting our arrival. After parachuting into the icy wilderness, full of fear and trepidation, we reached the snow tractors and from that moment on we were on a war footing.

We had to operate under complete radio silence. We were alone, with no back-up and no chance of retreat if our worst fears were confirmed.

We approached the base wary of what was awaiting us, but when we got there the base appeared devoid of life, a ghost town. Instantly, our suspicions were roused, but, just like all the previous campaigns I had fought during the War, we had a job to do and so our personal fears could not shroud our judgement.

As we split up to search the base, a trip wire was detonated and a siren sounded, destroying the silence and startling the whole force. A shout was soon heard, demanding us to identify ourselves, but the voice could not be targeted. With our guns raised the Major introduced us to the voice, and then, thankfully, the voice was given a body. The voice belonged to a lone survivor, and what he divulged made us more anxious and had us wishing that there were more troops amongst our ranks.

The lone survivor claimed that in Bunker One was the other survivor from the "tunnel" trip, along with one of the mysterious Polar Men that we had heard on the recorded broadcast. Despite obstructions and objections from the survivor, Bunker One was ordered to be opened. The survivor had to be held back and his fear and anguish panicked us instantly, and none of us wanted to be the one to enter the bunker.

Fortunately, I was not selected to enter; that honour was bestowed on the youngest member of our unit. He proceeded inside, hesitating slightly as he struggled with the door. Once inside, a silence descended across the base, followed moments later by two gunshots. The door was opened and the Polar Man dashed to freedom. None of us was expecting what we saw, and the Polar Man had fled into the surrounding terrain so quick that only a few token shots were fired.

Out of fear and awe at what we had seen, we all decided to go into the bunker. Go in we did, and two bodies were found. The soldier who had pulled the short straw was found with his throat ripped out, and, more heinous, the survivor had been stripped to the bones.

What we had witnessed demanded answers; and with our abject anger at seeing one of our unit die within hours of our landing on the continent, our anger was taken out on the lone survivor who had warned us against opening Bunker One.

The whole unit listened categorically to the Major's questions, but it was the answers that were to provoke the most intrigue. The first question that needed answering was just what had happened to the other survivor, and how he had become trapped in the bunker with that Polar Man. However, the lone survivor preferred to start from the beginning, from when they had first found the "tunnel". Whilst he narrated what had happened, the scientist who had accompanied us scribbled down everything divulged.

It transpired that the area near the tunnel was one of Antarctica's unique dry valleys, and that was how they managed to find the tunnel with such ease. Every one of the 30 personnel at the Maudheim base was ordered to investigate and, if possible, find out exactly where the tunnel led.

**"We were informed that we were to investigate 'anomalous' activities around the Mühlig-Hoffmann Mountains from the British base in Maudheim.**

**"Antarctica, so we were told, was 'Britain's secret war'."**

They followed the tunnel for miles, and eventually they came to a vast underground cavern that was abnormally warm; some of the scientists believed that it was warmed geothermally. In the huge cavern were underground lakes; however, the mystery deepened, as the cavern was lit artificially. The cavern proved so extensive that they had to split up, and that was when the real discoveries were made.

The Nazis had constructed a huge base into the caverns and had even built docks for U-boats, and one was identified supposedly. Still, the deeper they travelled, the more strange visions they were greeted with. The survivor reported that "hangars for strange planes and excavations galore" had been documented.

However, their presence had not gone unnoticed: the two survivors at the Maudheim base witnessed their comrades get captured and executed one by one. After witnessing only six of the executions, they fled to the tunnel, lest they be caught, with the aim to block up the tunnel—though "it was too late; the Polar Men were coming", claimed the survivor.

With enemy forces hot on their tail, they had no choice but to try to get back to the base so that they could inform and warn their superiors about what they had uncovered. They managed to get back to the base, but, with winter approaching and little chance of rescue, they believed it was their duty to make sure the secret Nazi base was reported; and so they split up, each taking a wireless and waiting in separate bunkers. One of the survivors tempted one of the Polar Men into the bunker in the hope that they'd believe only one had survived. The plan worked, but to the detriment of his life and to the radio. Unfortunately, the brave soul in Bunker One had the only fully operational wireless radio, which was destroyed in the fracas. The other survivor had no option but to sit, wait and try to avoid going stir crazy.

The mystery of who or what the Polar Men were was explained, not satisfactorily but explained nonetheless, as a product of Nazi science; and the enigma of how the Nazis were getting power was also explained, albeit not in scientific terms. The power that the Nazis were utilising was by volcanic activity, which gave them heat for steam and also helped produce electricity, but the Nazis had also mastered an unknown energy source because the survivor claimed: "...after what I witnessed, the amount of electricity needed is more than could be produced, in my opinion, by steam".

The scientist amongst the party dismissed most of what was divulged, and rebuked the survivor for his lack of scientific education and implied that his revelations "could not possibly be true". Though the scientist dismissed the survivor's claims, the Major didn't. He wanted to know more about the enemy that we were facing, but, more fundamentally, just what the Polar Man was going to do next. The answer from the survivor did nothing to comfort us and provoked the scientist to announce that the survivor was "certifiable". Disconcerted is too weak a word to describe how we felt when the survivor replied to the Major's questions about the escaped Polar Man's intentions: "He will wait, watch and wonder just how different we taste."

On hearing that, the Major issued the battle cry, and guard duty was set up whilst the Major and the scientist discussed, in private, just what we were to do next, even though it was obvious to the rest of us.

The next morning we were ordered to "investigate the tunnel", and for the next 48 hours we made our way steadily to the dry valley and the supposed "ancient tunnel". Upon arriving in the dry valley we were all amazed, for we had been told that Antarctica was completely ice-bound and yet here we were in a valley that reminded me of being back in the North African Sahara. We were forbidden from even approaching the tunnel until the temporary base camp had been erected; and whilst the men constructed the base, the scientist and Major investigated the tunnel.

After a few hours, they returned to the now complete camp to chronicle what they had seen and what our next plan of action was to be. The tunnel was not an ancient passageway at all, claimed the scientist, although the Major added that the walls were made of smooth granite and looked infinite. We were informed that we would be able to make our own minds up after we had rested for the night.

Sleeping in Antarctica during the summer months was difficult with perpetual daylight covering the continent; but that night, sleep was even more difficult to come by with all the thoughts running through each of our minds about what we would find and just when, or where, we would encounter the Polar Man again.

Just before we were assigned our times for guard duty, we were informed that we would be following the tunnel all the way—"...to the Führer, if needs be".

That night our fears were confirmed, as the Polar Man did indeed return. However, this time no more casualties occurred [on our side], but the Polar Man was slain as he was lured to the camp. The scientist decided that the Polar Man was "human" but, it seemed, had been able to produce more hair and withstand the cold far more effectively.

The corpse, after a brief post-mortem, was stored in a body bag, and with the cold could be preserved until a more meticulous dissection could occur.

The next morning it was decided that two would remain at the tunnel's entrance with the corpse, the tractors, the equipment but, more fundamentally, the radio. The Major, leading the expedition, needed the Norwegian for his expertise and also the scientist; the survivor, too, was critical for the mission's success. The rest of us wanted to join them. I was selected with the other jubilant four who would be undertaking one of the most exciting and possibly one of the most important expeditions in human history.

The two who were kept behind were disappointed, but their roles were just as vital to the mission's success as the nine who would be traversing into the unknown.

As the nine of us prepared to enter the tunnel, we made sure that we took enough ammunition and explosives to wage a small war and hopefully destroy the base in its entirety, for that was our mission: not to salvage, but to destroy.

We walked into the darkness, and thankfully after four hours of

**"The cavern proved so extensive that they had to split up, and that was when the real discoveries were made. The Nazis had constructed a huge base into the caverns and had even built docks for U-boats..."**

walking we began to see some light in the far distance. However, the light was still another hour away; and as each of us battled with our mind's questions of what we would uncover, we inched forward.

Eventually we reached the vast cavern that was artificially lit. We were then led to where the survivors had witnessed the executions. The survivor stated it was as covert as one could possibly have wished for.

As we looked over the entire cavern network, we were overwhelmed by the numbers of personnel scurrying about like ants, but what was impressive was the huge constructions that were being built. From what we were witnessing, the Nazis, it appeared, had been on Antarctica a long time. The scientist jotted

down everything he could, drew diagrams and took rock samples as well as the odd photograph. The Major, on the other hand, was more interested in how the base was to be destroyed without being caught by the Nazis present.

After two days of vigilant reconnaissance, the scientist and Major decided on the targets for the mines. The mines were to be placed all around the roof of the cavern, with other targets on the to-do list such as the generator and the petrol dumps and, if possible and attainable, the ammunition dumps.

Throughout the day, mines were laid and more photos were taken; and with the odds of not being detected looking good, a hostage was taken, as well as proof of the Nazi base, the "Polar Man" and photographs of new, and quite advanced, Nazi technology.

When the mission to place the mines that would destroy the base had been accomplished, as well as substantial proof of the base gathered, we headed towards the tunnel—but, alas, we were spotted, and more of the Polar Men and a troop of Nazis gave chase. Upon reaching the tunnel, we needed to put an obstacle in the way to slow down our enemy long enough for the mines to detonate. Some mines were placed at the entrance to the tunnel, and when the explosions were heard we were hopeful that not just the base had been comprehensively destroyed but so, too, the enemy forces giving chase. We were wrong.

The mines did indeed close the tunnel, but, for those Nazis and Polar Men behind, the chase was still on. In a fighting retreat, only three of the 10 escaped the tunnel: the Norwegian, the scientist and myself. The rest had fallen gallantly in making sure that some of the party survived.

Upon reaching the safety of the dry valley, enough mines were laid to close the tunnel permanently. After the mines were detonated, there was no evidence of any tunnel ever existing.

Suspiciously, very little of the evidence unearthed remained. Whether it had been lost accidentally or purposely, it mattered little because the scientist had already made his and, ultimately, the mission's own conclusions.

The camp was disbanded and we returned to the Maudheim base where we were evacuated and flown back to the safety of the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Upon reaching South Georgia, we were issued with a directive that we

were forbidden to reveal what we had seen, heard or even encountered.

The tunnel was explained away as nothing more than a freak of nature; "glacial erosion" was the scientist's specific term. The "Polar Men" were nothing more than "unkempt soldiers that had gone crazy"; the fact that they were German was never submitted into the report, and any notion of the mission going public was firmly rebutted. The mission would never be made official, though certain elements of the mission were to be leaked to the Russians and the Americans.

So my last Christmas of World War II was spent on the Antarctic continent in 1945, fighting the same Nazis that I had fought against every Christmas since 1940. What was worse was the fact that the expedition was never given any recognition, nor the survivors any credit. Instead, the British survivors were de-mobbed from the forces, whilst the scientist and his report would soon disappear, the mission never to be known about except by the select few.

That mission never made the history books, but the return mission in February 1950, conducted by a joint British-Swedish-Norwegian expedition that lasted till January 1952, did. The main purpose of the expedition was to verify and investigate some of the findings of the 1938-39 Nazi

expeditions to Neuschwabenland.

Five years after our mission, Maudheim and Neuschwabenland were revisited, and that expedition had everything to do with the Neuschwabenland campaign, but, more importantly, with what we had destroyed. For the intermediate years between the missions, the Royal Air Force continuously flew flights over Neuschwabenland. The RAF's official reason for their extensive flights was that they were searching for suitable places to set up base camps. However, one can't help but wonder.<sup>3</sup>

[The SAS officer's account ends here. Ed.]

**"The mission would never be made official, though certain elements of the mission were to be leaked to the Russians and the Americans."**



*"Apparently it's run by stupid adults."*

## How Britain Gained the "Knowledge"

*My U-boat men, six years of U-boat warfare lie behind us. You have fought like lions. A crushing superiority has compressed us into a narrow area. The continuation of the struggle is impossible from the bases that remain. U-boat men, unbroken in your war-like courage, you are laying down your arms after a heroic fight which knows no equal. In reverent memory we think of our comrades who have sealed their loyalty to the Führer and Fatherland with their death. Comrades, maintain in the future your U-boat spirit with which you have fought at sea, bravely and unflinchingly, during the long welfare of our Fatherland. Long live Germany!*  
Your Grand Admiral.

— Grand Admiral Dönitz, 4 May 1945,  
ordering his U-boats to start their return journey.

With 16 German U-boats sunk in the South Atlantic area between October 1942 and September 1944, and with most of those sunk engaged in covert activities, Britain had long since been aware of Neuschwabenland being a possible base, but it was not until after the war in Europe had ended that the world awoke to the possibility.

On 18 July 1945, newspapers around the world focused their headlines on Antarctica. The *New York Times* stated "Antarctic Haven Reported", whilst others claimed that "Hitler had been at the South Pole".<sup>4</sup> These headlines which shook the world were based, in part, on fact. The news reports and events happening in South America made the world sit up and take notice, not least the military forces of the United States and Great Britain.

On 10 June 1945, an unmarked German U-boat surrendered to the Argentine Navy; no further details were released. The whereabouts of at least a hundred other U-boats were still a mystery, as renowned historian Basil Liddell Hart noted: "During the early months of 1945 the size of the U-boat fleet was still increasing... In March, the U-boat fleet reached its *peak strength* of 463 [emphasis added]."<sup>5</sup>

The mystery deepened when, on 10 July 1945, the German U-530 surrendered at Mar del Plata, Argentina, and it only took eight days for the world to know. However, the U-boat mystery did not end with U-530; just over a month later, on 17 August 1945, U-977 also surrendered at Mar del Plata. Even more curious was the fact that the same month, U-465 was scuttled off Patagonia.

Only three months after the Kriegsmarine's U-boat's strength had peaked, the first of the unaccounted-for U-boats appeared. Unfavourably though, historians tend to gloss over the enigma of the missing U-boats and Hart also offers no explanation other than to explain the 362 known U-boats' fate: "After Germany surrendered in May, 159 U-boats surrendered but a further 203 were scuttled by their crews. That was characteristic of the U-boat crews' stubborn pride and unshakeable morale."<sup>6</sup>

With so many U-boats missing—a minimum of 40 were estimated missing at the end of the War—and with Britain still possessing one of the world's largest navies and strategically based territories in the Falklands and Antarctica, Britain was the

most ideally placed of all the Allies to deal with a Nazi haven. It would have been the best informed about the missing U-boats due to its southern hemisphere territories and an empire that, though crumbling, was still the largest the world had ever seen. Intelligence soon substantiated the suspicions with the interrogations of the captains of both the U-977 and U-530.

Captain Wilhelm Bernhard, commanding the U-530, claimed that under Operation *Valkyrie-2* his U-boat set off to the Antarctic on 13 April 1945. Under interrogation he divulged just what the mission had involved. Supposedly, 16 crew members had landed on the Antarctic shore and deposited numerous boxes that were apparently documents and relics from the Third Reich. Heinz Scheffer, captain of the U-977, also claimed that his U-boat had spirited relics away from the Reich. However, less plausible is the theory that the U-boat delivered the remains of Hitler and Eva Braun to the South Pole, and other theories that the Holy Grail and the Spear of Destiny were also taken to the Antarctic only cloud the truth.

What does help substantiate their story is the little-known fact (which *Pravda* reported on 16 January 2003) that, in 1983,

Special Services seized a confidential letter that Captain Scheffer wrote to Captain Bernhard, and in the letter Scheffer pleads to Bernhard not to publish his memoirs in too profound a detail and, in fact, states his intent for the world not to know the truth:

"We all made an oath to keep the secret; we did nothing wrong: we just obeyed orders and fought for our loved Germany and its survival. Please think again; isn't it better to picture everything as a fable? What results do you plan to achieve with your revelations? Think about it, please."<sup>7</sup>

Another mystery that has never been solved is that of the cargo of

mercury contained inside U-859 which was sunk on 23 September 1944 by the British Royal Navy submarine HMS *Trenchant* in the Strait of Malacca in the Java Sea, so far from home with such an anomalous cargo—a cargo that could be utilised as a fuel source. The survivors divulged to their British captors what they had been carrying, and that information would have definitely raised eyebrows when their find was relayed to British Intelligence.

The case of U-859 was not an isolated one. Many German U-boats were active throughout the world; many supplied the Japanese throughout the war and, strangely, even after the German capitulation. In July 1945, an unmarked German U-boat, supposedly part of a secret convoy, delivered a new invention to Japanese research and development units. The Japanese constructed and activated the device. The device soared into the sky where, however inauspiciously, it burst into flames. It was never dared to be built again.

The British Navy, having already retrieved many of the U-boats that had surrendered in Norway, was well aware that many more had fled, especially if the tale reported in the Latin American press about a German U-boat convoy totally annihilating the British destroyers that engaged the convoy is to be believed. On 2 May 1945, *El Mercurio* and *Der Weg* claimed that the final naval battle of World War II between the Kriegsmarine and the Royal

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Navy had been won by the Kriegsmarine, and that the story had been suppressed in the Western press for fear of stimulating German resistance. Only one destroyer was reputedly spared and the Captain was reported as declaring, "May God help me, may I never again encounter such a force".<sup>8</sup> Though the story has been suppressed and the British Government would never admit to the event, rumours of the naval battle are whispered amongst ex-servicemen—but alas, very little of the rumour is substantiated.

The missing U-boats were part of the Antarctic jigsaw puzzle that Britain had been putting together since the Nazis first sent Admiral Ritscher on his Thule-sponsored polar mission. And with Britain's Intelligence network—the SOE (Special Operations Executive) and the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service)—providing virtually all the information to the Allied Forces via the *Enigma* machine<sup>9</sup> and its immense European spy network during the War, the picture was appearing slowly.

One prime example of Britain's Intelligence excelling was in how much

Britain knew about the Nazi's secret atomic weapons programmes which, in turn, helped the RAF bomb the Nazi's secret research station at Peenemünde in the Baltic Sea. The Germans were at a loss to how the British had even heard about it, let alone been able to bomb it.

Continued next issue...

### About the Author:

James Robert is a civil servant with an agency of the UK Ministry of Defence, as well as a World War II historian and writer. He has travelled extensively throughout North Africa and Europe to investigate mysteries of Britain's secret wars. With a family from a military background, and with German sources giving many so-called "myths" credence, he has set a personal mission to delve deeper into the strange, suppressed, little-known and anomalous activities that were conducted before, during and after the war against Germany. "Britain's Secret War in Antarctica" has been taken from his forthcoming book that will document some of his investigations.

James Robert can be contacted at james-robert@hotmail.co.uk.

### Endnotes

1. Admiral Byrd's press release, 12 November 1946.
2. *El Mercurio*, 5 March 1947; Admiral Byrd interviewed by Lee van Atta.
3. Former British SAS officer, documenting the 1945–46 Neuschwabenland campaign.
4. *Le Monde*, 18 July 1945.
5. Hart, Basil Liddell, *History of the Second World War*, Cassell, London, p. 410.
6. *ibid.*, p. 411.
7. *Pravda*, 16 January 2003, citing a confidential letter from Scheffer to Bernhard. The letter, dated 1 June 1983, was seized by Special Services, whom a German source claims were from the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and sent at the USSR's behest.
8. The Captain cited by *El Mercurio* and *Der Weg* has never been named, nor has the story been given any credence by the British Navy.
9. The Intelligence network performed wonders for the Allies, especially after the capture of an *Enigma* machine with decoding documents on 9 May 1941; the German U-110 was captured by HMS *Bulldog* and HMS *Aubretia* of the 3rd Escort Group. The Germans never discovered the fact that Britain had broken their "unbreakable" codes. However, it was Britain's fortuitous capture which painted the full picture and helped complete the jigsaw puzzle, thus compelling them to take the possibility of a Nazi Antarctic haven seriously before others did.

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